

who turned out to support their Terrapins in record numbers. This championship is the product of outstanding athletes and coaches, untold hours of hard work, and the passionate support of the University of Maryland community. The University of Maryland demonstrates excellence in both academics and athletics, and I'm proud of this team for contributing to that legacy.

RECOGNIZING FOREST PARK HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL ERIC BRENT ON RECEIVING THE WASHINGTON POST DISTINGUISHED EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AWARD

**HON. GERALD E. CONNOLLY**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 08, 2010*

Mr. CONNOLLY of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Principal Eric Brent, the winner of the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award for Prince William County Schools.

Principal Brent has more than 23 years of educational experience and is currently the principal of Forest Park High School. He has served as a secondary classroom teacher, coach, sponsor, guidance counselor, director of student services, assistant principal, and principal during his career. He is a student body favorite and is known as a devoted mentor who takes a sincere interest in the lives of his students. Teachers and parents cite his administrative style as polite and collaborative. His diverse experience and enthusiasm for education have given him the skills and talent to be a first-class principal.

His work at Forest Park High has produced a long list of results and accolades. In 2008, Newsweek magazine ranked Forest Park High School on its annual list of "America's Top Public High Schools." During his tenure, student scores on the SAT improved from 1511 to 1528 and the number of graduates attending four-year higher education programs increased from 50 percent to 60 percent. In 2009, Principal Brent was recognized for these accomplishments when he was named Principal of the Year in Prince William County.

Madam Speaker, I ask that my colleagues join me in congratulating Principal Eric Brent for receiving the Washington Post Distinguished Educational Leadership Award for Prince William County Schools. He is an asset to our local school system, and his work is helping countless children and setting them on the right path for a positive future.

THE GAZA FLOTILLA INCIDENT

**HON. ADAM B. SCHIFF**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, June 8, 2010*

Mr. SCHIFF. Madam Speaker, Israel has the right and the duty to defend its citizens from attack, and it is both reasonable and prudent to interdict weapons from being smuggled into Gaza.

Last Monday's confrontation between Israeli naval forces and a group of activists seeking to bring supplies to the Hamas-governed Gaza

Strip was tragic, and I join the worldwide outpouring of grief over the deaths of nine people aboard the *Mavi Marmara*.

In the midst of his tragedy, we must not forget that Israel has been engaged in a protracted struggle with Hamas, a terrorist organization that has repeatedly stated that it will never accept Israel's right to exist, and which has used the 1.4 million people of Gaza as human shields for rocket attacks and other acts of terror against Israeli citizens.

The Turkish group that organized the flotilla, the IHH, must accept responsibility for the loss of life aboard the ship by deliberately provoking a confrontation with Israeli Navy personnel enforcing a legal blockade of Gaza. Rather than accepting Israel's offer to offload its cargo in Israel for subsequent transport via the land crossings into Gaza, the *Mavi Marmara* chose to try to run the blockade and then resisted the Israeli boarding party, beating Israeli troops with metal pipes and other weapons. In the days since the incident, it has been revealed some of those aboard the ship were jihadist provocateurs seeking a clash with the Israeli military. And regrettably in this, they were successful.

The international community must show greater resolve in forcing Hamas to renounce terror, accept Israel's right to exist, and abide by prior agreements. We must work together with Israel to meet the urgent needs of the people of Gaza, but Hamas bears ultimate responsibility for the continued suffering of the people of that region.

NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2011

SPEECH OF

**HON. GARY L. ACKERMAN**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 27, 2010*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 5136) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for military activities of the Department of Defense, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. ACKERMAN. Madam Chair, several months ago I received a letter from a soldier who lives in New York. The letter was very similar to those that many members of Congress receive from brave servicemen and women who reside in their districts. The letter spoke of multiple tours through Iraq and Afghanistan, of volunteering for more service even after completing enough tours to retire, and of the pride of a soldier who loves his country and is willing to sacrifice so much to defend it.

But this letter was not quite the same as those that many of us here in the Capitol receive from time to time. You see, despite serving his country for more than 20 years, despite volunteering to serve in a combat zone to defend America's principles of freedom from tyranny and from persecution, and despite receiving two bronze stars for meritorious service to his country, the gay soldier who wrote this letter is required by United States law to lie about who he is or face being discharged from the military.

For 16 years, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" has placed an unthinkable and immoral burden on

gay and lesbian servicemen and women, who, under United States law and unlike their heterosexual counterparts, must hide their sexual orientation and their partners from the military. Their partners are not eligible for the military spousal benefits to which the partners of heterosexual servicemen and women are entitled, including health care and better housing. Madam Speaker, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is, by definition, a discriminatory policy.

In the course of tonight's debate, several members have characterized the House of Representatives' impending vote to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" as a step forward for morality and equality. And it is. But, before we collectively pat ourselves on the back for a job well done, I would remind my colleagues that tonight's step forward is only a result of the giant leap backwards we took when we instituted the policy in the first place. Years from now, when our children read about "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in their history books, what will they think of a government that so shamefully turned its back on gay servicemen and women in the interest of a political compromise?

Madam Chair, politics is a business of grays. Seldom do we have the opportunity to vote on legislation that is black or white, moral or immoral, right or wrong. Tonight is the rare exception.

For the thousands of gay servicemen and women who so bravely serve our country everyday but who live in constant fear of being discovered for who they are, for the principles of freedom and equality upon which the United States of America was founded, and in the interest of righting a wrong that has persisted for far too long, I rise in support of the amendment before us and for the patriotic soldier whose letter I enclose for the record; a letter in which he implores me: "If and when this issue ever comes up for debate, and even for a vote in Congress, I respectfully ask you to remember all the gay military personnel who are right now risking our lives to defend the U.S. and its values."

Madam Chair, that moment has come.

Hon. GARY ACKERMAN,

*Member of the House of Representatives, Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC.*

DEAR CONGRESSMAN ACKERMAN: I am a captain in the United States Army Reserve, and am presently deployed to Afghanistan. I am writing to you with regard to the military's so-called "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) policy. As you may know, there is currently a strong push in Congress to overturn DADT—under which otherwise qualified gay men and women are still being involuntarily dismissed from service—and replace it with a policy of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. I strongly support this proposed policy change. I would like to explain the basis for my judgment.

I am a veteran of both the U. S. Navy Reserve and the U. S. Army Reserve. In the latter I have served as both a sergeant and as a commissioned officer. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 I have completed tours of duty in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Kuwait. I was informed that I had completed twenty good years of Reserve military service, and had thus earned the right to retire. But I did not want to retire with my country still at war. So I volunteered for another combat zone deployment, and am serving once again in Afghanistan. I have been at my current duty station—. I recite this brief resume to let you know that I am no mere observer of the military, but rather someone who has dedicated much of my life to our national defense.